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SAGEBRUSH *and* SPRAY



A Cruise to Santa Cruz Island



By
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AS CAP BARRY tuned the engine of his ketch Juana, he surveyed the shining deck with approval. Cap is a typical devil-may-care skipper and my good friend. In a few minutes we would be under way for a fishing trip to Santa Cruz Island. I stood in the bow of the Juana, fascinated by the wonderful display of water craft resting in the morning sun behind Santa Barbara's breakwater.

"All Clear, forward?" Cap called.

"All clear!"

"Cast off!"

▲ As I let go the mooring line, the ketch swung slowly around and the unexpected happened. The engine stopped. Cap hurriedly glanced at the boats ahead, then pressed the starter. No use. He dashed below to crank the engine. A fresh westerly breeze was now moving the ketch squarely before the wind. I racked my brain and suddenly had an idea. Running aft, I grabbed the tiller. Could I keep her clear of the craft dead ahead.

Below, Cap was cranking and cursing. I had the tiller hard over, barely missing the long sleek hull of the first yacht, scraping another amidships with a sounding "thwack," . . . a jar that made Cap appear with uncanny quickness.

"I'll take her!" he said, sharply. "Hoist jib! . . . Quick! . . . Stand by to slack away the weather sheet when she pays off!"

▲ Up, up, I ran the jib. A puff of wind filled its belly, and Juana sprang to life. It seemed for a moment she would crash the next yacht head on.

"Slack away! . . . Hold! . . . sang out Cap.

With this jibing maneuver, he cleared the yacht by two feet. I held my breath, astonished.

"Hoist mizzen! I'm going to tack!"

I repeated the startling order, ran up the mizzen sail, and shouted:

"Are you cuckoo?"

"Yes, for sea room!" he grinned.

With gathering speed the ketch was now rushing through a narrow lane of bows and

sterns of large craft. I could hear the dull thump, thump, of moorings as we passed over them. Cap suddenly swung off squarely before the wind, and cleared the harbor by his recklessness and skillful handling of the ketch.

"Fine work, Cap!" I boomed, and he laughed.

Swinging into the wind again, we hoisted the mainsail and got under way. Cap worked on the engine while I arranged our Six-Nine tackle.

Juana began to step over the waves under easy canvas as we watched the land fading slowly away in the distance.

Using strips of mackerel belly for cut bait, we began to troll for game fish in mid-channel. Presently Cap sighted several flying fish.

▲ Suddenly I felt a quick, strong pull. My line slackened and I let the bait drift back. Again came the swift tug and I let the fish run with it. My reel shrieked out in protest. The six-



THE AUTHOR AT THE TILLER OF THE JUANA

ounce bamboo tip quivered. I put on the drag and struck hard. Bang! My nine-thread line tightened.

▲ "You've hooked him!" exclaimed Cap, with excitement as he swung the ketch into the wind.

I pumped and reeled as hard as the tackle would stand. The fish went down, only to rush

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THE JUANA AT LADY'S HARBOR

A Cruise to Santa Cruz Island

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up pounding the surface. He now shot around in a great half-circle, to plunge down again. My reel whizzed. The red silk marker flashed eight times, telling me that four hundred feet of line was out. The rod tip bent dangerously down—the fish was now shaking its head trying to throw the bait.

"Play him safe! He's fighting mad!" Cap called, warningly.

▲ I thumbed the pad lightly to draw the line taut. He resented this, then suddenly rushed to the surface. A big glinting yellowtail leaped into the air, and shook himself to freedom.

"Hard luck," said Cap. "I bet that old boy has gone right back to that patch of floating kelp."

"Uhuh!" I gasped. "Gosh, what a magnificent fish—blue, green, yellow and silver!"

We got under way again, and our baits drifted back. Suddenly Cap yelled, "Look! A school of barracuda!"

Sure enough, a big school was riding the swells, the barracuda showing their long gray forms in the blue water. We both had strikes at the same time. I threw on my drag, struck, reeled and struck again. Then came the peculiar jerk and the line slackened, common to the Channel barracuda when hooked. They always come in without a struggle, and have a cunning habit of running toward the boat. I gazed over at Cap. He was standing up, reeling in rapidly with a puzzled look on his face. Presently he shouted with glee:

"He's still on, he's still on!"

Only in the cockpit, did they put on their acrobatic stunts of lofty tumbling, trying hard to show off.

▲ Several moments passed. Cap was reeling in a bonita when a long dark shadow hove in sight and charged the small fish. I stood up, and saw a long-tailed thresher shark gobble the bonito, and yelled. The huge fins gleamed as he loomed up, then slid out of sight. When I saw Cap jam his rod-butt in the socket and strike, I reeled in my own bait to give him the ocean.

"I've stopped the dirty bum!" called Cap.

"Good luck," I replied.

All was excitement. The shark rolled, and plunged down in sudden rage. Cap's light bamboo rod bent almost to the breaking point as he reeled trying to bring him up.

"Put helm up and keep your weather sheet to windward!"

"O. K. Cap," I answered.

About ten minutes later the shark came to the surface, threshing the water with his long sword-like tail, then he settled down under the surface shaking his head like a mad bull. Now

began a hard fight of give and take. Cap reeled in rapidly, and gasped:

"Look! he's coming at us!"

"A trick to recover line," I replied. "Don't fall overboard."

On came the shark until he sighted the boat, then turned sharply, took the leader over his shoulder and dashed away taking one hundred feet of line. Cap slowly pumped and reeled in fifty feet of line. Zip! The shark had it back again. The shark was now making fierce runs and seemed about to break the light tackle a dozen times, but at last he was played out. I squinted at Cap in admiration as he skillfully brought him foot by foot to the boat.

▲ I caught the wire leader, belayed it around a cleat, and dragged him up with the gaff. An nine-foot shark slapped and wallowed in his defiance, gave a furious leap, broke the gaff pole, at the same time tearing himself lose from the hook and darted away like nobody's business.

"Gee, what a fighter!" I says enthusiastically. "And the old boy only had one eye."



"Yeah, and two pilot fish, with more eyes."

"Two pilot fish!" I repeated and pricked up my ears.

"Sure," continued Cap, "Sharks are near-sighted and use two small parasite fish to locate food for them, and the small fish go after any moving object that attracts their attention, and the shark simply follows the pilot fish, see?"

I nodded and he goes on talking.

"Now take this thresher shark, for instance. He lives on the surface of the water and is a man-eater. Yes, and he will attack a whale, too."

"A whale!" I gasped.

▲ "Sure, why the most amazing thing I ever saw, was a thresher shark fighting a whale. He came up on top. He had set his jaws and clung to the backbone of the whale, and every time the whale came to the surface to shake him off,

the shark would slash him with his long sword-like tail until the whale's back was cut and bleeding, then the other sharks came and finished him."

▲ A fresh wind came suddenly and blew jets of spray the full length of the boat, so we reeled in our lines for the thrill of cruising high peaks of a rolling sea.

We were tearing along before a strong westerly wind, and Juana was making good weather of it, when the bobstay broke at tip of the bowsprit. I took the tiller while Cap crawled to the end of bowsprit to make repairs. Now and then a great wave, with its curling white crest, came roaring down upon us. As the bow rose and fell, Cap was dipped deep into choppy seas. It seemed a long time but he finally finished, and again the Juana's bow was cutting the water.

Presently we could make out the dim outlines of Santa Cruz range over our bow, and half an hour later we entered a little harbor near Point Diablo to visit the famous Painted Cave.

The Painted Cave is a glorious and impressive spectacle. The salts have colored it in a fantastic manner, in brilliant yellows, soft browns, reds, greens, and vivid white. In our dinghy at low tide, we entered the great Gothic arch of the cave. The roar of the sea-lion, and strange sounds came to our ears.

▲ At Prisoner's Harbor we saw some remains of South Sea huts, perhaps, a movie set. Cruising along this island of romance and mystery we finally dropped anchor at Lady's Harbor, where a picturesque beach was lapped by rippling green waves.

In our snug harbor the next morning, brown pelicans, gulls and eagles were soaring and swooping, intent on their morning meal. With the usual routine over and our fishing gear arranged, Cap started the motor. A dark triangular shape with wings like a huge bat moving under water attracted us.

"Stingaree!" exclaimed cap.

About ten minutes later we ran into a school of bonito, and landed six beauties by running in a wide circle. As Cap changed our course my line started to sizzle off the reel. I counted five, before I pressed on the thumb drag and struck him. As the fish felt the hook it leaped about six feet out of the water.

"White Sea Bass!" yelled Cap.

He sounded and I thought sure he was on his way to China. I stopped the fish finally and began to play him—that is to say, the bass began to play me. He ran off with line as though the reel had been a free spool. I pumped, he pulled. Only after a twenty-minute battle did I reel this bass to gaff. It weighed just thirty pounds.

We cruised around for half an hour and nothing happened, then I suggested that we drop the hook and try for giant black sea bass.

Cap thought this a good idea, so we found a likely place just outside the kelp. We changed to heavy tackle and baited our hooks with a good size mackerel and let it sink to the bottom. About one hour later I felt something moving away with my bait, and struck hard but lost him. It may have been a shark.

"Always wait until the second run before you strike," called Cap.

"Why," I answered.

▲ "Because they never swallow the bait until the second run."

Just then Cap had a tug, and his line started out very slowly to sea. I was deeply interested now, because Cap knows his stuff on these giants of the deep. At one hundred feet the fish stopped. When he started again Cap's rod went up in a hard sweep and the fish was hooked.

The fish was away on a third run, swifter and longer. The strain was severe but Cap turned him, and then did not give the fish a chance to get rested. The battle was not spectacular as the giant sea bass do all their fighting on the bottom. That is their home, and they naturally don't want to leave home.

"Maybe its a shark," I sang out.

"Shark nothing!" returned Cap, "this son-of-a-gun is strong. Hand me my harness?"

I strapped on his harness, being very careful not to touch the rod, as this would disqualify his catch. The real struggle now began. The fish took the line over his shoulder and started to sea. Cap bent that bamboo rod trying to turn him. Now the fish appeared to be weakening. He came up and went down, and about one hour later, Cap gasped:

"I think he's coming up for a sun bath!"

Soon after that big bass rolled over on his side, glittering in the sunlight. Cap wiped the sweat from his face and reeled him in. He weighed two hundred and forty pounds. A few minutes later he was brought to gaff and Juana turned her nose back toward Santa Barbara.

WILD FLOWER TIME

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main line of the Southern Pacific turn left and follow the signs to Point Sal. There is a road leading right down to the beach and the rocky coast. The remains of the old wharf used many years ago are still there. In coming out, you come through Casmalia and Orcutt and back to the highway. At point Sal there is a prostrate form of Ceanothus or Wild Lilac, of a very deep blue. There are great quantities of the daisy known as Erigeron. Indian paint brush and Indian warrior, and the peerless Scarlet thistle. Down near the water you will find a great Caliopis with great quantities of bright yellow daisies. This is a perennial plant with a main stem or trunk which is about three feet high and perhaps six or eight inches in diameter. From this comes out great bunches of the yellow daisy.

It is easy to make the Point Sal trip in half a day. If you wish to take more time, go as far as Pismo beach and arrange to be there at low tide. You may drive along this beach for fifteen miles, or instead of going so far, you may turn left at Oceano and go along the road near the coast, passing the Waller-Franklin Seed Farms, and climb the hill to the right, taking you up into those great groves of eucalyptus planted by Dana, the Nipomo pioneer.

▲ There are quite a number of pools in this section. The soil is quit sandy and here we have the water plants. There is the blue lupine growing along this road and also the large yellow bush lupine.

Another interesting place in the same section is the road from Harriston, just south of Orcutt, to Lompoc. This takes you over territory which has the appearance of a desert country. Great quantities of prickly pear cactus and also of prickly phlox grow there. Along the line of the narrow gauge railway near Harriston, the thistle sage grows in great quantities. There are plenty of poppies, cream cups, tidytips, lupine and many other flowers.

South and east of Santa Barbara, there is a beautiful drive over Casitas Pass, where you find many scarlet bugler, monkey flower, paint brush, Clemitas and once again plenty of snowberries. The new Maricopa road will intersect the Casitas and open up quite a wonderful territory beyond Wheeler's Hot Springs. The road is not as yet open, although it is negotiable and in very fine condition for about eight miles beyond Wheeler's Hot Springs.

▲ On March first, I took the road known as Roosevelt highway leading north from San Luis Obispo. Out of San Luis Obispo are great fields of golden poppies and blue lupine, Morro Rock rising out of the ocean, the wonderful sweep of the beach at Cayucos, the flower strewn fields, and Cambria with its groves of pine trees. Last year the rainfall in Cambria was 54 inches, so there are many

fine flowers in that section. Even in the middle of summer you will find water in the streams. Beyond Cambria is one of the finest displays of wild flowers I have ever seen in California—mile after mile of them with the rocky coast on one side and the tree-clad hills on the other.

▲ A little way beyond Cambria you pass San Simeon, and from here on you cross a number of streams. One of them, Salmon Creek, has quite a large waterfall visible from the road. There is a good trail up to this fall, leading to some interesting caves. You do not know what a Bay Tree or California Laurel is until you see the ones in this creek. Shortly beyond Salmon Creek you will strike Redwood Gulch, and here are great quantities of the giant Redwoods. Practically every foot of this road is covered with flowers. It is no trouble at all to go to the end of this road and back in one day. On the return trip you can leave this road at Cambria and travel through a very picturesque country.

There is colorful country beyond Paso Robles to the east into the Devil's Den district where for miles and miles the fields are covered with poppies, lupine, owl clover, baby blue eyes and many other flowers, as though a gigantic rain-

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